

Crown of Thorns



STORY & ART BY
Yoko Kamio

1



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1

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contents

<i>case1</i>	3
<i>case2</i>	45
<i>case3</i>	75
<i>case4</i>	105
<i>case5</i>	135
<i>case6</i>	165



My heart
went out
instead to
the dark
lords they
vanquished...

... and the
hideous
monsters
they slew.

Even as
a child, I
never liked
heroes.



FUKAMI!

case
1

CROWN
OF
THORNS

神尾葉子

YOKO KAMIO

NOBARA
FUKAMI!



YEAH.

HEY, FUKAMI,
IS IT TRUE
THAT YOU
LIVE IN THAT
OLD MANSION
ACROSS THE
RIVER?

D-
DEAD...?

AREN'T YOU
SCARED?
THAT PLACE
SEEMS LIKE
IT'D BE, LIKE,
HAUNTED OR
SOMETHING.

IT WAS
A MURDER-
SUICIDE,
BROUGHT ON
BY CRUSHING
DEBT. I'M ALL
THAT'S LEFT
OF THE
FAMILY.

AND WHY
JUST YOU?
WHERE
ARE YOUR
PARENTS?

DEAD.

WHOA,
THAT'S
INSANE!

YOU
REALLY
LIVE
THERE
ALL BY
YOUR-
SELF?



WE ONLY
TALKED
TO YOU
BECAUSE
YOU DON'T
HAVE ANY
FRIENDS!

WHAT'S
YOUR
DEAL?

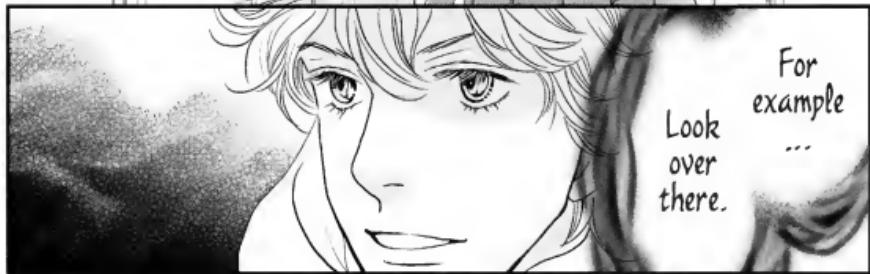
NOBARA
MEANS
"WILD
ROSE,"
RIGHT?
WHAT A
JOKE!

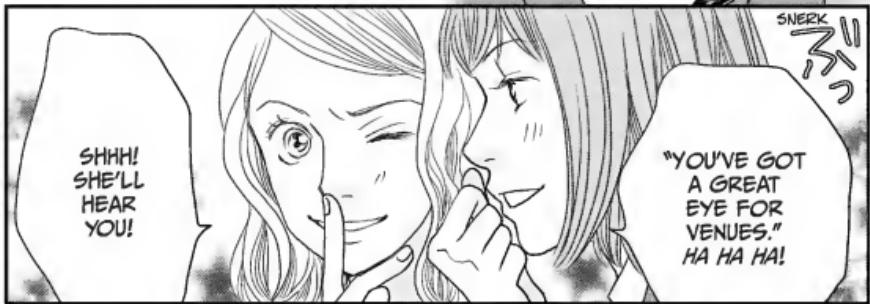
MORONS!

YOU'RE
NOTHING
BUT
THORNS!

HMPH!
THAT
WAS
ALL A
LIE?













Hmmm...
Maybe my
imagination is
just giving him a
physical form?

ARE
YOU STILL
LIVING
HERE
ALONE
?

YEP.

WHERE
ARE YOUR
PARENTS
AGAIN?
OSAKA?

OH.

HENMI.

HEY!

IT'S
FUKAMI.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE IT
DOESN'T
SCARE YOU
TO LIVE
HERE.

Man, those
vines!

I HAVEN'T
SEEN YOU
IN A LONG
TIME.

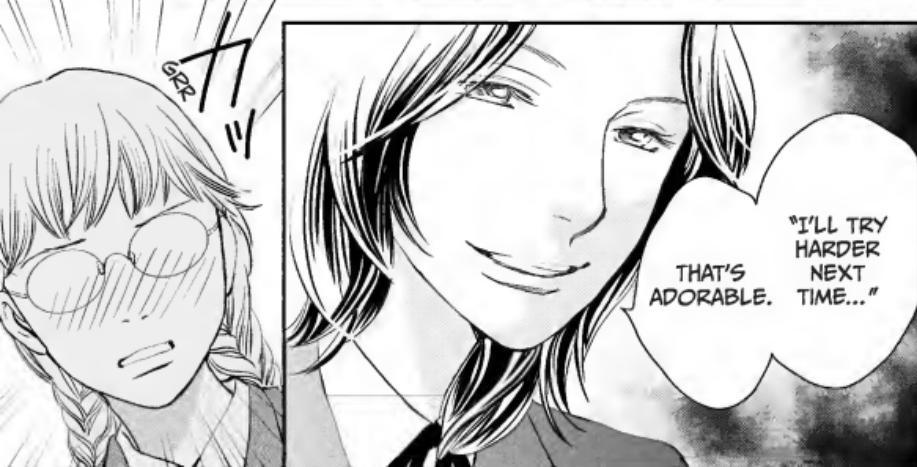
HUH--

SOMEONE
AT SCHOOL
TODAY
THOUGHT
IT WAS
HAUNTED.

















AND
NOTHING
UNEXPECTED
WOULD EVER
HAPPEN TO
ME.

I'D MARRY
A DECENT,
NORMAL
GUY.

I FIGURED I'D
GET INTO A
DECENT LOCAL
COLLEGE, THEN
GET A JOB AT A
DECENT LOCAL
COMPANY.

WHAT
YOU SAID
EARLIER
...

SO MAKE
SOMETHING
HAPPEN.

DO
SOMETHING
UNEXPECTED.

...ABOUT
ME BEING
A "BIT
PLAYER."
IT STRUCK
A NERVE.

I'M GOING
TO SPEND
MY WHOLE
LIFE...

...BEING
A BIT
PLAYER.





What... =



LIKE...



LIKE WHAT?

... am I
doing
?! =



MAKE HIM
YOURS.



THAT UPPER-
CLASSMAN
EARLIER...

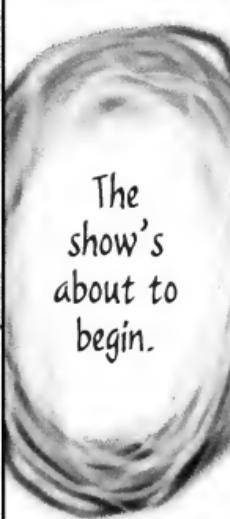




PUT ON
SOME
MAKEUP,
AND...

...TRY
TELLING HIM
YOU LIKE
HIM?





Do something unexpected.

WE'VE GOT SCIENCE NEXT, RIGHT?

I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HIM.

HEY, LEMME BORROW YOUR LIP GLOSS.

UGH, BUT I'M SO TIRED...

YOU NEED TO DO WHAT I TELL YOU TO, DAMN IT!

SORRY, I...

...as the star!

Recast yourself...

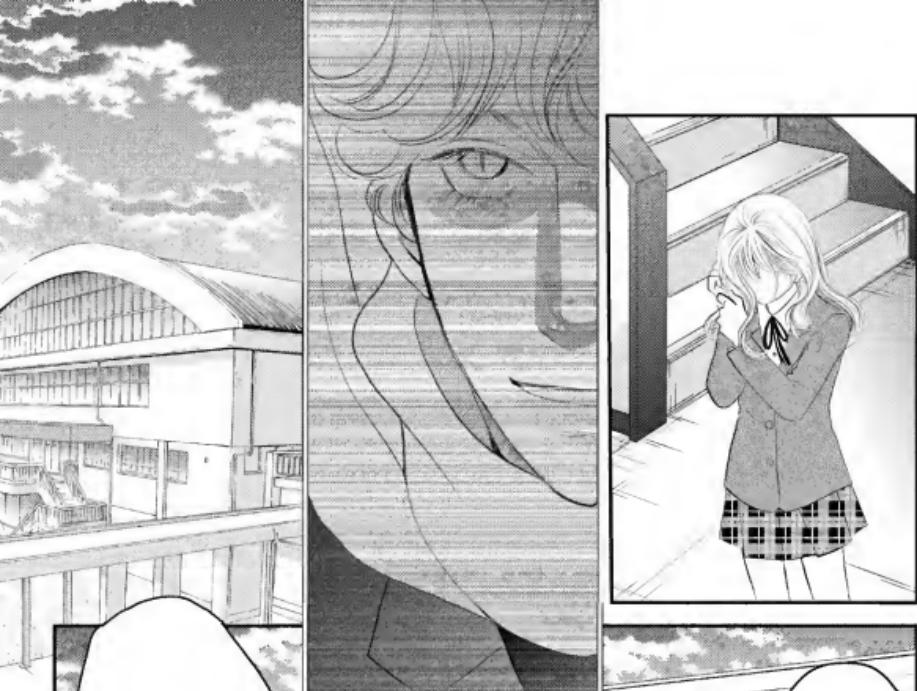
Make him yours.

SOOORRY.

MISA, I'VE GOT A DATE TODAY...

...SO COULD YOU DO CLEAN-UP DUTY FOR ME?





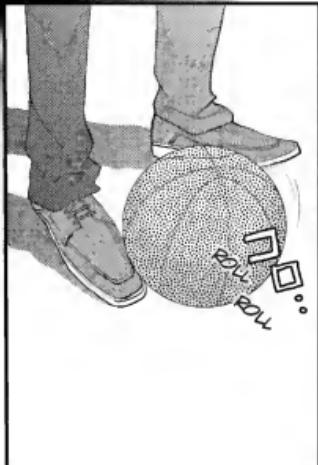
HI.

YOSHI-
KAWA
...



CAN
I...

...TELL
YOU
SOMETHING
?



YOSHIKAWA
HAS A
GIRLFRIEND
...

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
THIS.

IT'S
THAT BITCH,
MISA!



SHE
PRETENDED
TO BE OUR
FRIEND TO
GET CLOSE
TO HIM!

SHE
PLAYED
ME!







YOU DID
IT ALL BY
YOURSELF.

I HAD
NOTHING
TO DO
WITH IT.



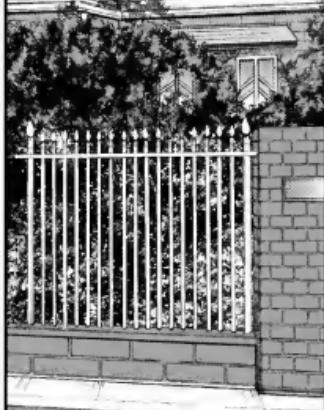
I'M NOT A
BIT PLAYER
ANYMORE.



Isn't it
fun to toy
with their
hearts?



The mist
must have
turned
into this
black
orb...









His
shadow...

WHAT
...

...ARE
YOU?

...A
DEMON.

I'M WHAT
YOU
PEOPLE
CALL...

... has
wings!







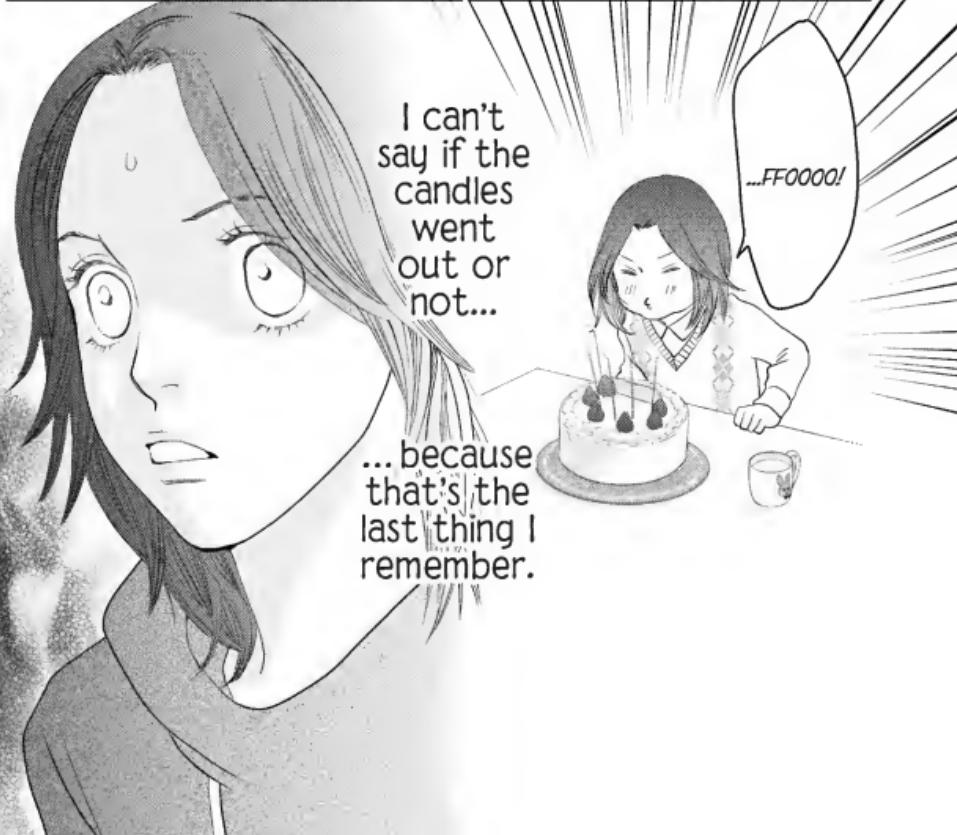
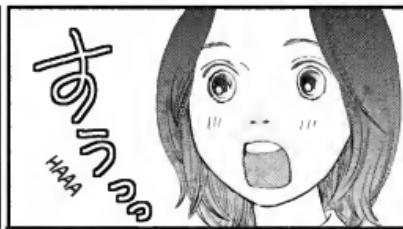
case
2



The last
birthday I
remember
celebrating
...

It was right
here in the
loft, with my
grandfather.
He'd always
been good
to me.

...
is my
fifth.



And today,
on my 16th
birthday...

... a man
stands
before me,
claiming
to be a
demon.

I GUESS
YOU'VE
NEVER
MET A
DEMON
BEFORE,
HMM?

WELL,
THAT'S
UNDER-
STANDABLE.

That
voice!

WHAT'S
WRONG,
NOBARA?

HAVE I
LEFT YOU
SPEECHLESS?

That's the voice...

IT'S YOU, ISN'T IT?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S BEEN TALKING TO ME SINCE I WAS A KID!

...I've been hearing in my head all this time!

IT TOOK A GREAT MANY YEARS BEFORE I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO MANIFEST MYSELF TO YOU THREE MONTHS AGO.

THAT'S RIGHT!

RECOGNIZED MY VOICE, DID YOU?

HOLD IT!
WAIT RIGHT THERE!

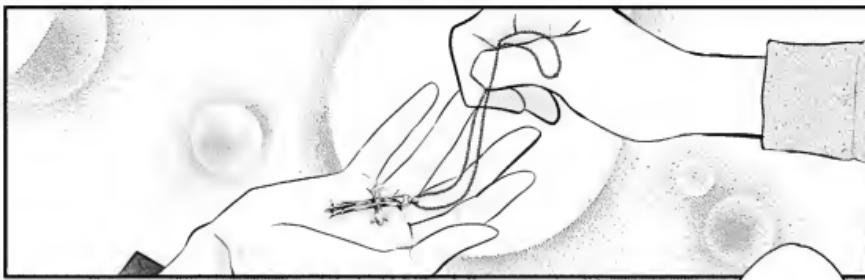
AND NOW, AT LONG LAST...

...I CAN APPEAR BEFORE YOU IN CORPOREAL FORM.

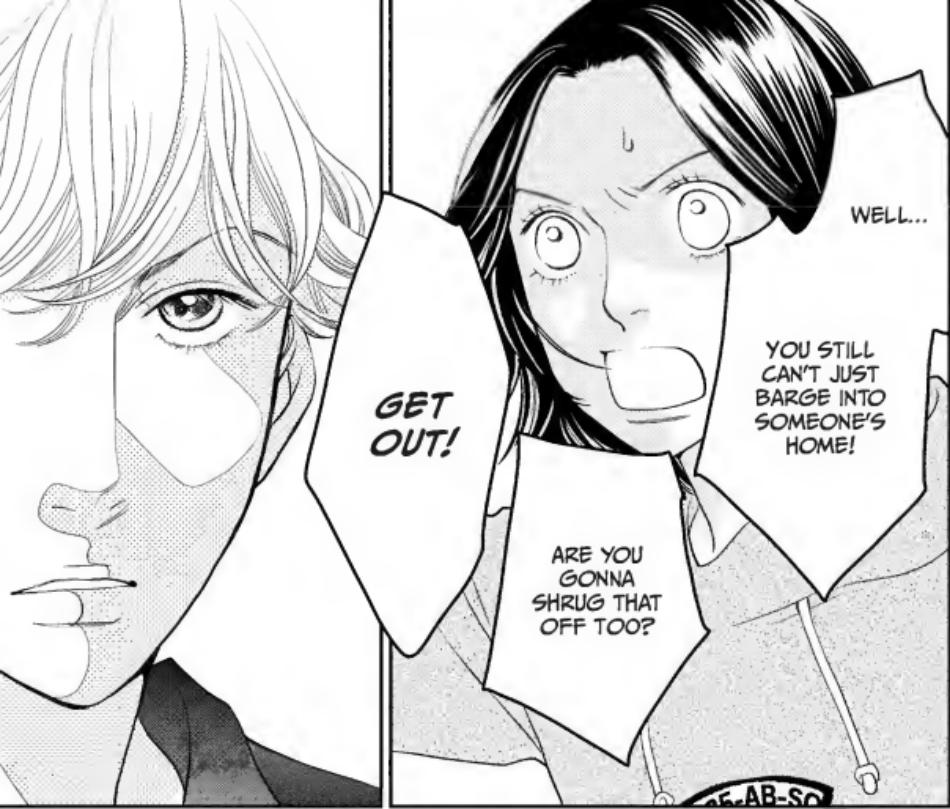
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE HOW GOOD THIS FEELS!













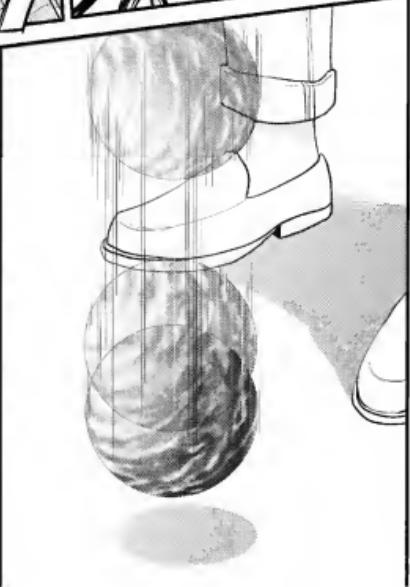
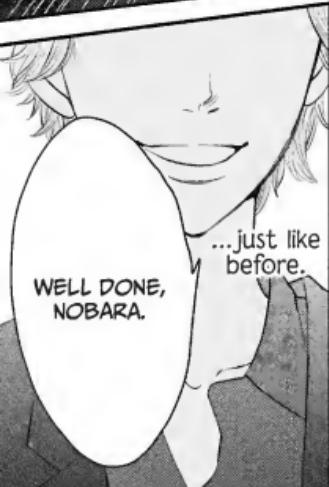


Until now,
I've been
the only
who could
see him.

Now I guess
everyone
can.









THESE ORBS...

HATRED,
BOREDOM,
GREED,
INDOLENCE,
JEALOUSY—
YOU NAME
IT.

THEY'RE A
CRYSTAL-
LIZATION OF
NEGATIVE
FEELINGS.



TO MY
KIND, IT'S
OUR DAILY
BREAD.



WHAT
IS THIS
LUNATIC
SAYING
?!

Huh?

WHEN THE
MIST IS
FILTERED
THROUGH
YOUR
BODY...

...AN ORB
IS BORN.



Gotta
get
away.





I'm
dead.

Sixteen years
of a very
strange life...

... and then
a demon
does
me in.





NOBARA!

ONLY MY
GRANDPA
WAS WITH
ME.

MY
PARENTS
TOLD ME.

NOBARA!

THEY SAID I
COLLAPSED
WHEN I TRIED
TO BLOW OUT
THE CANDLES.

PLEASE!
SOMEBODY!

YOUR
GRANDFATHER
WAS THE
ONE WHO
SUMMONED
ME.

THAT'S
RIGHT.

TAKE ME
INSTEAD!

AN ANGEL!
A DEMON!
ANYONE!

Even added to hers, it only amounts to 18 years.

You haven't much life left.

But I'm afraid...

Your request ...

I'll grant it.

I COULDN'T BEAR FOR HER TO DIE SO YOUNG!

NO!

SHE... SHE'LL DIE AT 18?

7 HEH

THERE HAS TO BE SOME WAY TO EXTEND IT!

PLEASE!

Truly,
human
desperation
knows no
bounds.

HEH HEH
HEH

You've given
up your life
and you're
still trying to
save her.



SO I'M
SUPPOSED
TO DO THAT
IN EXCHANGE
FOR MY
LIFE?



WHAT A
BRIGHT
YOUNG LADY
YOU ARE.



YOU
MEAN...

...THE
POWER
TO
MAKE
THOSE
ORBS?



Very
well.



On her
16th
birthday,

I'll give
her a
special
power...



I'm still living with my cats, as always!



Tora used to cry at my bedside until I'd get up to make breakfast.



But now he just quietly steps on my face.



This is how I wake up to draw the manga every day.





I COULDN'T
CARE LESS
ABOUT LIVING
A LONG LIFE.

AND IF I
TOLD YOU
TO SCREW
OFF?



GRANDPA
WAS THE
ONLY ONE
WHO EVER
GAVE A CRAP
ABOUT ME,
AND HE'S
GONE.

SCHOOL'S
A CHORE,
I HAVE NO
FRIENDS...

MY OWN
PARENTS WANT
NOTHING TO
DO WITH ME.



To hell
with this.

DO YOUR
WORST.



I'VE GOT NO
LOVE FOR
THIS LIFE.

MS.
HENMI!?

GRRR...

I'm not
gonna let
this creep
tell me
what to do.

OH! WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE,
NOBARA?

IS THIS
A FRIEND
OF YOURS,
NOBARA?

HE HAS
SUCH
BEAUTIFUL
BLUE
EYES.

WHAT IS
WRONG WITH
YOU, CHIRO?

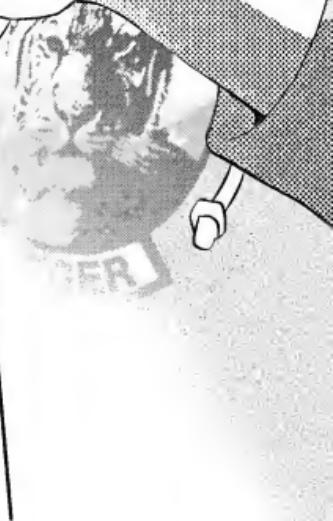
I'M SO
SORRY!
HE NEVER
BARKS LIKE
THIS...

WOOF



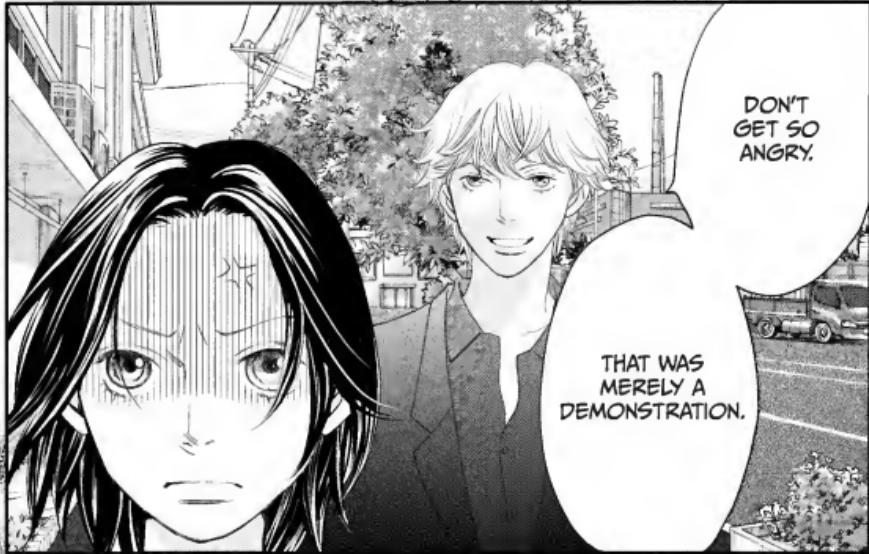


DAMN
IT!





WHAT WAS I JUST DOING?



Seriously...



I had such a boring life...

... and now
a demon
is laughing
beside me.

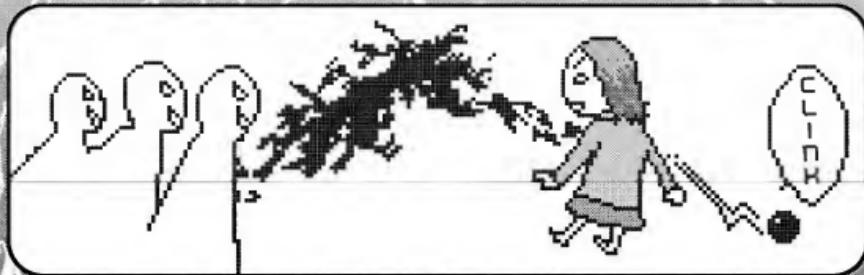
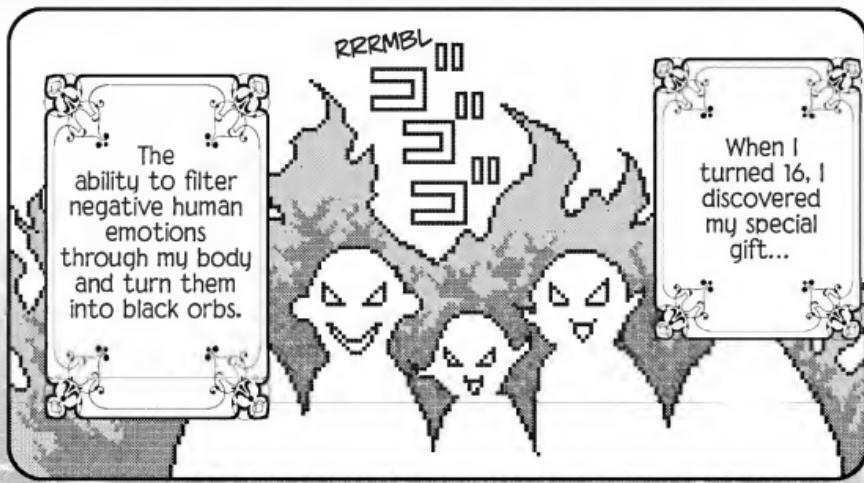


NOW
TECHNICALLY,
THAT ISN'T
TRUE.



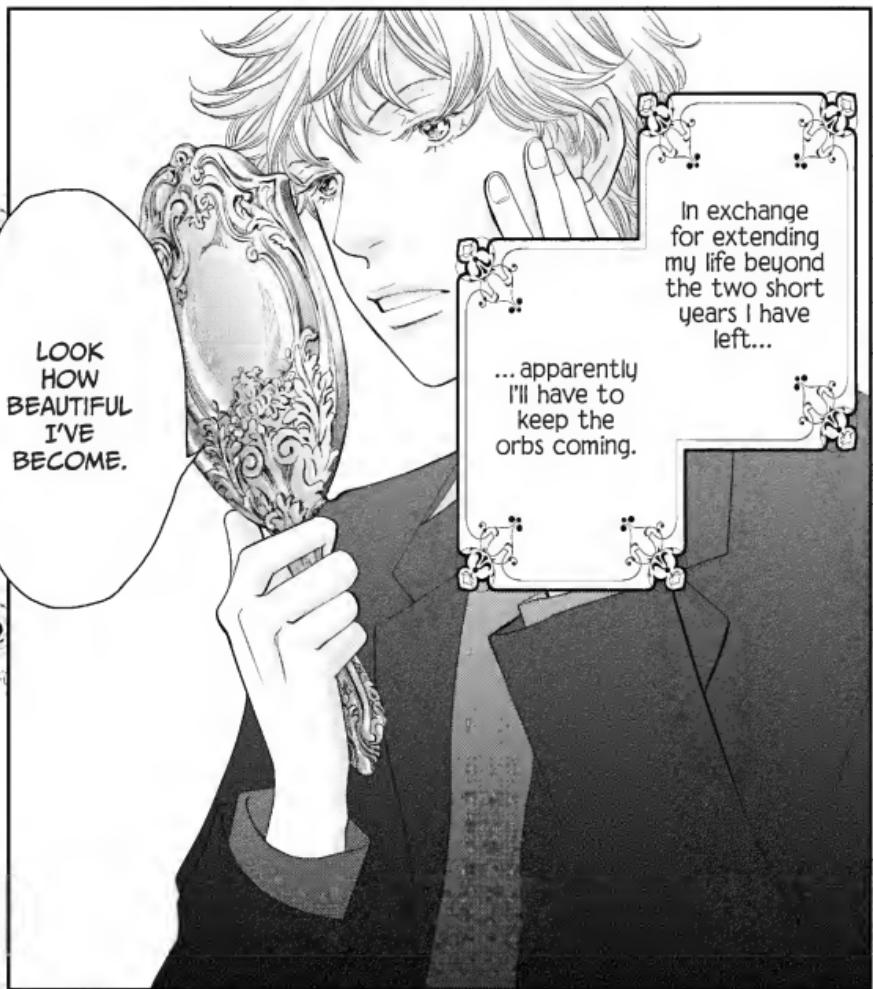


case
3



... are
what
demons
eat.

And those
orbs...















This happened back in grade school too...

HENMI,
WHY ARE
YOU ALWAYS
HANGING OUT
WITH FUKAMI?

YEAH,
SHE'S SO
WEIRD.

The exact
opposite of
me.

Henmi was
always
surrounded by
other friends.

EVERYONE
NOTICES ME
WHEN I'M
WITH YOU.

WHY?

HENMI,
LISTEN.

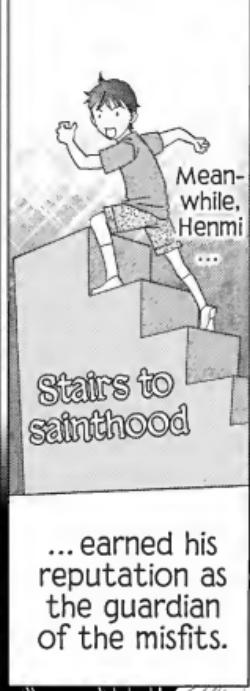
Henmi
was the
light, and
I was the
shadow.

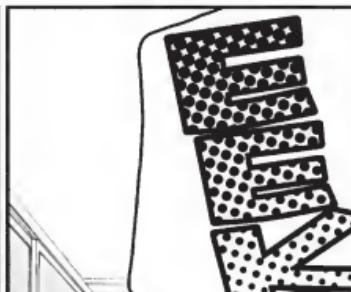
I'M
FINE BY
MYSELF.

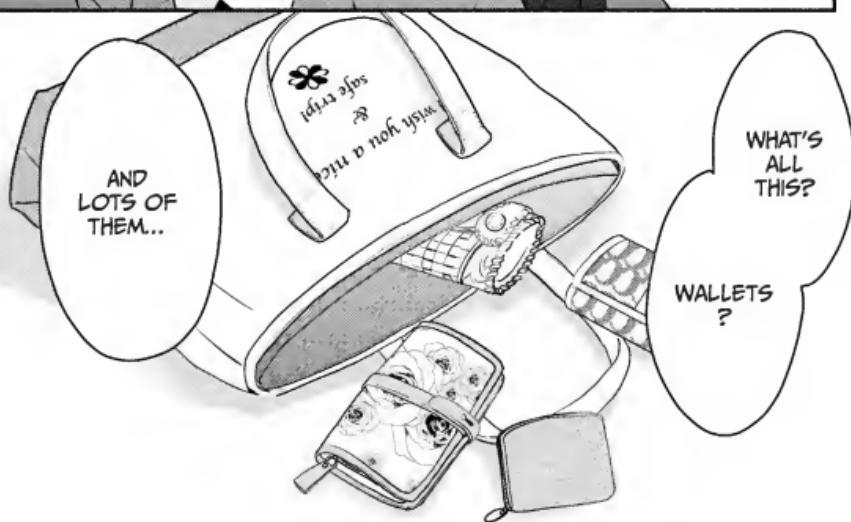
SO YOU
NEED TO
STOP.

YOU NEED
TO STOP
WALKING HOME
WITH ME.









I just got back from Hawaii

Aloha!
I went with two other manga artist friends.

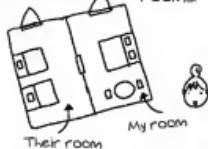


But something scary happened there.



So each room had its own entrance, but there was a shared door between them.

We had connecting rooms.

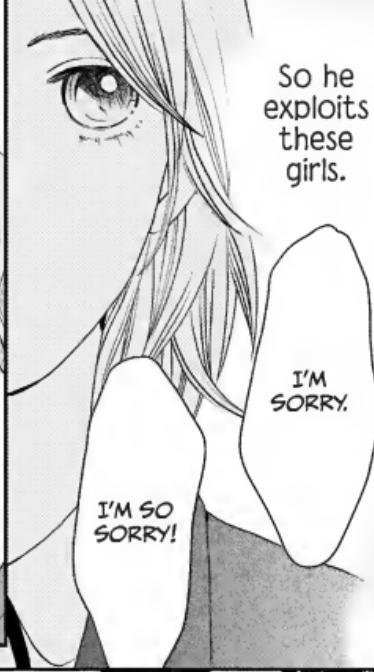


I was scared, but I left the lights on before we went out...
I had a private room, and when I got back it was dark and scary.















Who
the hell
does he
think he
is?

LUCIO
...?

He wants
an orb
or two?
Fine.

GRANDPA...

But am I really
gonna spend the
rest of my life
taking orders
from him?

What-
ever.



WHY?

WHY DID YOU
MAKE A DEAL
WITH HIM?





What could be scarier than living with a demon?

This is nothing.



WHAT DO YOU
WANT WITH
TAKERU?







WHOOSH



I DIDN'T MAKE ANYONE DO ANYTHING.
THAT GIRL WAS PROBABLY JUST TRYING TO GET MY ATTENTION!

I'M AS SHOCKED AS ANYONE.

Mist.

Come to me.



Quickly !





SCREAM IF
YOU WANT.
NO ONE'S
GONNA
COME.



People can
be scarier
than any
demon...



I POINT.
YOU
FETCH.

Damn
you,
Lucio!



case
4

CROWN
OF
THORNS





HEH
HEH.

HEH.

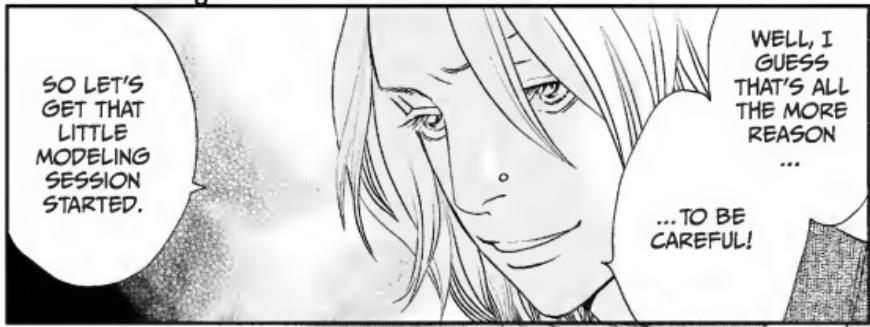
WHAT'S
SO DAMN
FUNNY?

AND YOU
THINK NAKED
PICTURES
ARE GONNA
SCARE ME?

IT'S
JUST
THAT...

...I HAVE
A DEMON
CONTROLLING
MY LIFE.

YOU
THINK I'M
AFRAID OF
GARBAGE
LIKE YOU?



Maybe
he's
right.
I really
am
nuts...







SNOW

...

MOUNTAINS
...?

WHAT
THE
HELL
...?

SH

SH

FWOOOSH

SH

SH

SH







YOU'RE AN
AWFULLY HIGH-
MAINTENANCE
PET.

SHEESH.

THEN YOU
COME
MARCHING
IN WITH
YOUR WEIRD
SCENERY...

W-WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE?

I SAID I
COULD
HANDLE THIS
MYSELF!















OR I
WON'T
GIVE YOU
THIS.

STOP
CALLING
ME A
"RETRIEVER."



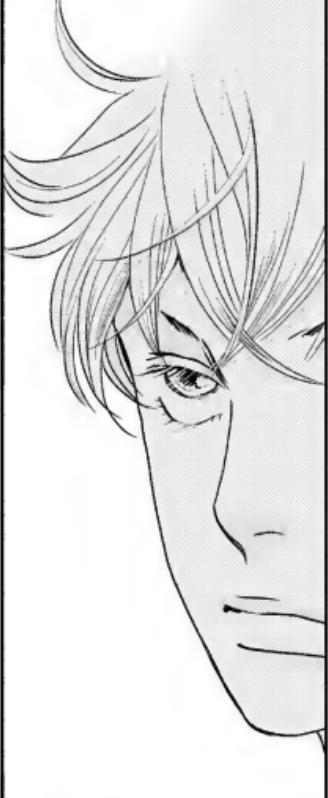
WHAT?



AND
THAT'S
HOW IT
HAS TO
BE.

WE'RE
EQUAL
PARTNERS
IN THIS.

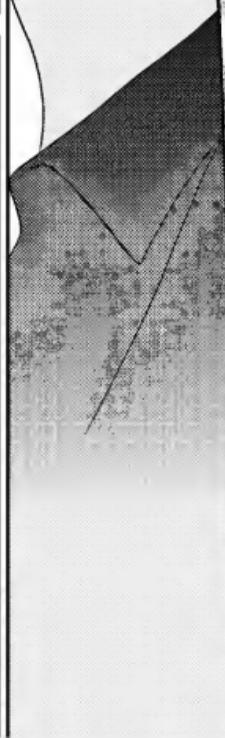
...
BECAUSE
IT GETS
ME WHAT I
WANT.
I'LL
GET THE
ORBS YOU
WANT...



IF YOU'RE
LOOKING FOR
SOMEONE TO
JUMP AT YOUR
COMMAND, IT'S
NOT GONNA
BE ME.



I said it.



GO AHEAD.
KILL ME IF
YOU WANT.



HEH.

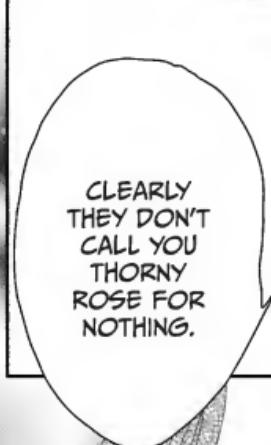


...



FAIR
ENOUGH

...
PARTNER.



CLEARLY
THEY DON'T
CALL YOU
THORNY
ROSE FOR
NOTHING.



One
day...

When Lucio
appeared

...

... it felt
like the
world had
ended.

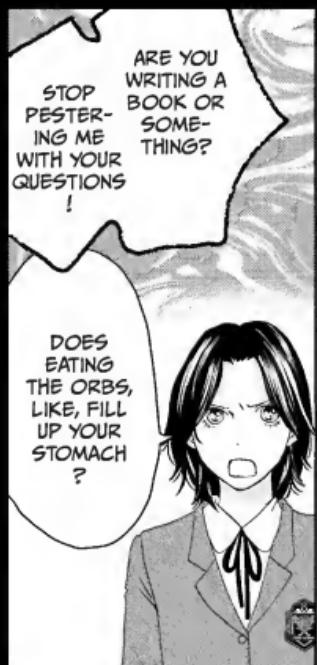
...in that
white snow
field...

One day,
this life
will be
taken
from me.

I can
feel it.

Is that
how my
life is
going to
end too?











I AM MERELY AN EMPLOYEE.

DEMONS WHO ATTAIN THE RANK OF CHAIRMAN ARE SO BEAUTIFUL THAT YOU WOULDN'T EVEN BE ABLE TO PERCEIVE THEIR PHYSICAL FORMS.

THE HIERARCHY OF DEMON SOCIETY IS DETERMINED BY THE BEAUTY ACQUIRED FROM NEGATIVE HUMAN EMOTIONS.

I'VE PREPARED A CHART THAT WILL MAKE THIS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND.



EATING HUMAN NEGATIVITY IS A TIME-HONORED TRADITION.

...I HAVE TO GATHER ORBS FOR YOU?

THIS INSANITY IS THE REASON...

THIS...



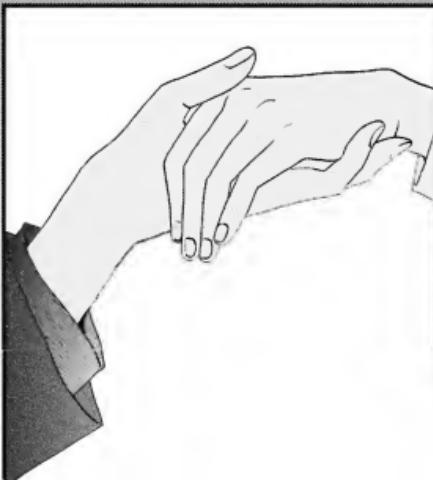




SO IT'S
JUST AS
WELL THAT
YOU'RE
WORKING
FOR ME...



...PARTNER.







case
5

CROWN
OF
THORNS



For example,
near the
convenience
stores late
at night...

CONVENIENCE STORE

I've gotten
pretty good
at acquiring
orbs.

And that's
when I
approach
someone
who's
emitting black
mist.

... there's
a moment
when the
neon lights
of the
shopping
district
flicker.

... and
make an
orb.

I GOT IT!

Touch!

I touch
the mist,
taking care
not to be
noticed
...

IT
COULDN'T
BE
EASIER...







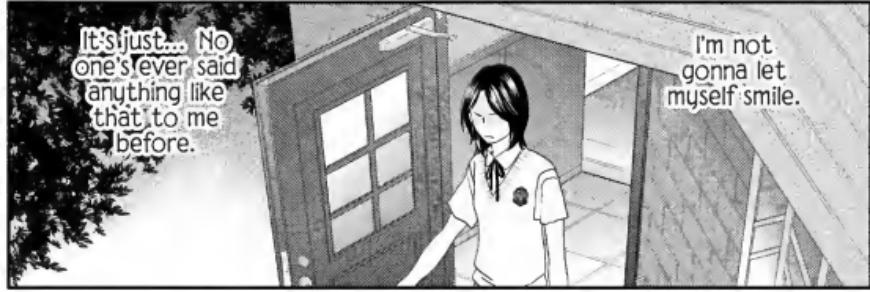
FOOLS,
DON'T THEY
GET THAT
YOU SEE
MORE THAN
THEY DO?



DON'T
WASTE YOUR
TIME WITH
MUNDANES
WHO CAN'T
UNDERSTAND
THAT.



It's just... No
one's ever said
anything like
that to me
before.



I'm not
gonna let
myself smile.



HAPPY
HUNTING!









FUKAMI,
IS THERE
SOMETHING
YOU'D LIKE TO
TELL ME?

A girl in
our class
had a bear
pendant
she loved,
and it went
missing.

It
became
a huge
deal.

Now I
remember.

The bear
pendant
incident.

I had
no idea
what he
meant.

Henmi
asked
me
that.

I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE
EVEN—

DO YOU
KNOW
SOMETHING,
FUKAMI?

Some girls
saw him ask
me, and got
suspicious.

STOP
IT!

WHAT?

HEY...
HOLD
ON A
MINUTE.

WHAT?



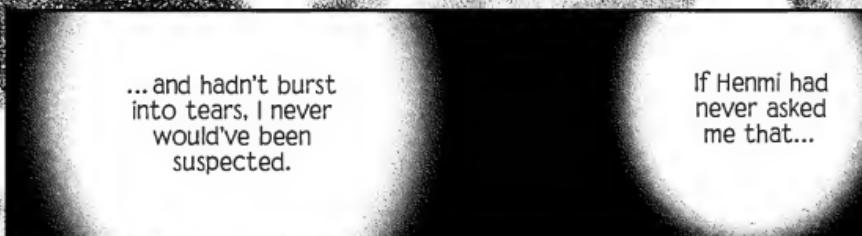
DON'T YOU
PICK ON
FUKAMI!

YOU
SHOULD
FEEL
SORRY FOR
HER!

SHE...
DIDN'T
DO IT.

FUKAMI...

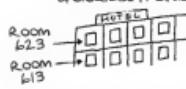
Then
Henmi
cried.



My Scary Hawaii Story, Continued



As I groped in the dark for the switch, I heard movement



But it's scary that two rooms so close would have the same key! Always lock your dead bolt!

The End





SEIICHIRO
SAID
HE WAS
SORRY!

I SAID
I'M FINE!

WHAT'S
YOUR
PROBLEM
?

HEY,
CALM
DOWN!

I WAS
JUST
WORRIED
ABOUT
YOU.

SORRY.

Yet again...

THAT'S
SO
RUDE!
YOU'RE
THE ONE
WHO
AMBUSHED
HIM!

FUKAMI.

TO HELL
WITH
THIS.

The Henmi
loop
begins.





He saw us.



I'll just tell Lucio for now.









PLEASE
LEAVE.

It was like I
just spaced
out for a
moment.

WHA...
WHAT?

OH!



LU...
LUCIO?

YOU
KNOW
HIM?

YOU JUST
COULDN'T MIND
YOUR OWN
BUSINESS...



RUINA-
TION
...?

I MEAN, HE'S
BEAUTIFUL.
LIKE, I HAD
CHILLS.

THAT
MAN...

...IS A
RUINATION
DEMON.

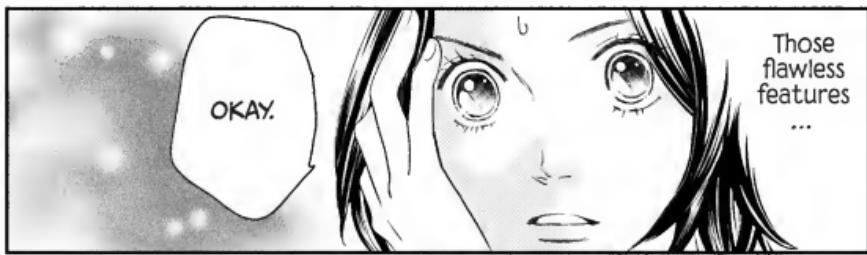
...A DEMON
THEMSELVES.

ANY HUMAN
HE TAKES
IN WILL
BECOME
ONE OF
TWO
THINGS—

...DEAD,
OR...

No way...

SHIVER







But I do
know he's
weird.

I don't know if he's my friend or my enemy.

DAMN
IT!

**YOU'RE
WORTH-
LESS!**

...!

CHIRO SURE
IS BARKING
A LOT.

What is
wrong
with
that
dog?

HI MOM,
I'M
HOME.





I WENT
THERE.





A PITY
ONE OF MY
SUBORDINATES
GOT IN THE
WAY.



ARE THERE
A LOT OF
DEMONS
AROUND
HERE?

SO...

SO WHEN
PEOPLE
TALK ABOUT
BEING
POSSESSED
BY
DEMONS...
THAT'S
LEGIT?

SERIOUSLY
?

I
WOULDN'T
SAY
THERE'S
A LOT.
BUT
THERE'S
A
DECENT
AMOUNT.

WELL, THE PERSON'S NATURE ALWAYS PLAYS INTO IT. IT ISN'T FAIR TO PUT ALL THE BLAME ON US...

SOME SORT OF DEMON MUST HAVE MADE ME DO IT!

Manga Artist
Kamio

LIKE, SOMETIMES YOU SEE PEOPLE ON TV...

I WOULDN'T EAT THREE WHOLE MANJU! I'M ON A DIET!

BUT...

IT'S ALL ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.

BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE PERSON ISN'T AWARE OF OUR INVOLVEMENT.

WE'RE TO BE TOTALLY SELF-RELIANT

...

WE DON'T INTERFERE

...

THERE ARE RULES IN OUR WORLD.

UHM?

WHAT IS IT?

AND WE CAN'T APPROACH THOSE WHO ALREADY HAVE A DEMON.

LUCIO...

THEN WHY WOULD HE COME TO MY HOUSE...?

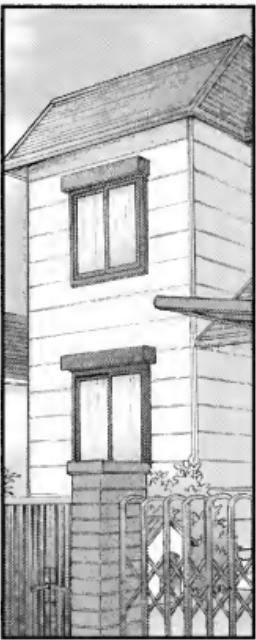
You're so sad

PFFT!

YOU'RE TOTALLY LETTING THIS GUY PUSH YOU AROUND!

Wah!
Put me down!

YOU REALLY TRY MY NERVES SOMETIMES.









PASSED
OUT, HAVE
WE?

YOU
REALLY ARE
WORTHLESS.

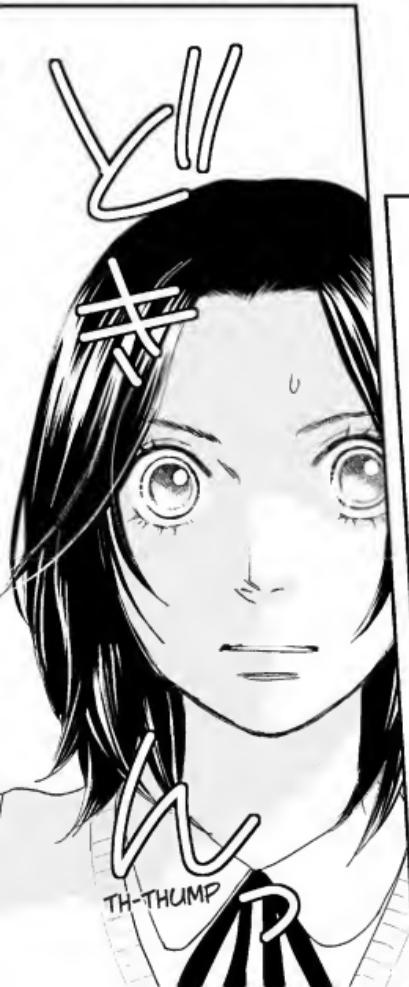
JUST
GARBAGE.

Good help
is so hard
to find.













His beauty completely transcends that.

His eyes aren't mere movie-star eyes.

...A
DEMON
THEM-
SELVES.

ANY HUMAN
BECOMES
DEAD, OR...



Yikes.
That was close !



How can
his smile
be so
pure?

Could
he really
be a
ruination
demon?!

I BET
YOU STILL DON'T
KNOW ANYTHING
ABOUT HIM, DO
YOU?





HOW DID
SOMEONE
AS
TALENTED
AS YOU
END UP
WORKING
FOR A GUY
LIKE HIM?

ENJOYMENT
DOESN'T
REALLY
MATTER
TO ME.

I KNOW
YOU DON'T
LIKE IT.

I DON'T
SEE HOW
HE'S
WORTHY
OF YOU.

HE'S A
REJECT
THROUGH
AND
THROUGH.

A LOSER
...?

YOU
SHOULD
COME
WITH ME.

NOBARA...

I CAN
OFFER YOU
MONEY,
POWER...

LOVE,
FRIENDSHIP...
WHATEVER
YOU DESIRE.

COME
WITH
ME...

...AND THIS
WORLD
WILL BE
YOURS.

YOU'VE BEEN
BY YOURSELF
FOR SO
LONG. YOU
MUST BE
LONELY.





Greetings.

I wrote that scary story, but other than that night, my trip to Hawaii was a lot of fun.

A stylish and adorable duo



Maki
Minami Matsutaka

We've known each other for more than ten years.

"That's the first time we've heard you scream!"

Is what they told me.
I'm sure it was!

But Hawaii is wonderful.
I'd love to go back!



Well, Crown of Thorns is scheduled to run for two volumes. So I'll see you again in Volume 2!

Thank you so much for reading!



Yoko Kamio



What did he mean by that?

Henmi.





AND
YOU TWO
FLEW OFF
INTO THE
DARKNESS.

HE
SPREAD
OUT
WINGS
LIKE A
BAT.

31

HEY

IF
I...

...TELL
SOME-
ONE ?

ALL RIGHT,
LISTEN.
EVEN IF YOU
DO TELL
SOMEONE...

...NO ONE
WILL BELIEVE
YOU. THEY'LL
THINK IT
WAS JUST A
DREAM.

YOU
HAVEN'T
CHANGED A
BIT SINCE
WE WERE
KIDS.

AS IF I
WOULD
EVER DO
THAT!

YOU'RE AS
CLUELESS
AS EVER,
FUKAMI.

SO
GO AHEAD
AND DO
WHATEVER
THE HELL YOU
WANT.



SORRY I
DIDN'T SAY
ANYTHING.

No
way.

I
REALLY
DO.

IT'S THE
PENDANT THAT
GIRL IN OUR
CLASS LOST.
IT WAS A
WHOLE BIG
THING.

DO YOU
REMEMBER
THIS?

Henmi
has a
demon
?

I USED YOU
IN ALL SORTS
OF WAYS TO
BUILD UP THAT
REPUTATION.

I BUILT UP
A LOT OF
GOOD-WILL
FROM THAT.

THEY
SUSPECTED
YOU, AND I
DEFENDED
YOU.

I WAS HOPING WE COULD LET BYGONES BE BYGONES, AND TALK SHOP A BIT.

I HAD NO IDEA THAT WE HAD SO MUCH IN COMMON!

I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THAT.

...FOR MAKING THOSE ORBS?

LIKE, YOU GOT ANY TRICKS...

I'm shocked.
I'm... speechless.

LOTS, HUH? MAN, I COULD NEVER DO THAT.

NO. NOT REALLY.

MAKING THOSE THINGS TOTALLY WIPES ME OUT.

IT'D PROBABLY KILL ME, MAKING A BUNCH EVERY NIGHT.

ALTHOUGH HE ASKS ME TO BRING HIM LOTS OF THEM.

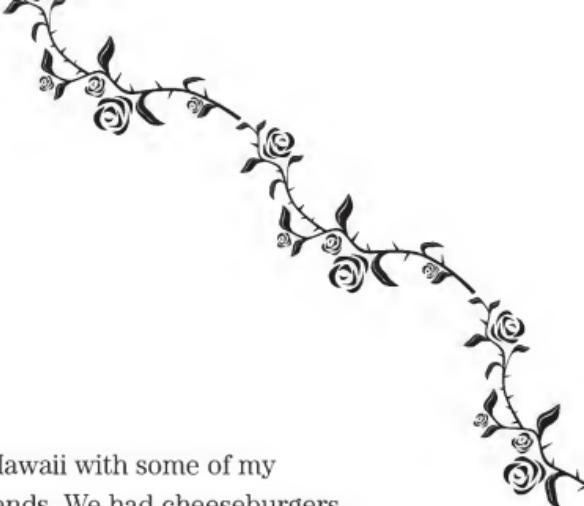
DOES YOUR DEMON GIVE YOU A QUOTA TOO?



HENMI?

To be continued





I went to Hawaii with some of my manga artist friends. We had cheeseburgers three days in a row, and ate plenty of pizza and French fries too. When I got back to Japan, I'd gained almost seven pounds! Getting fat is easy. Losing weight is hard. I really regret it now.

YOKO KAMIO

Yoko Kamio made her manga debut in 1986 with *HATACHINO MAMADE MATTEIRU* (Waiting Until 20). Her works since include *SUKI SUKI DAISUKI* (I Really, Really Like You), and *MARY-SAN NO HITSUJI* (Mary's Lamb). Following its release, *HANA YORI DANGO* (Boys Over Flowers) broke sales records by becoming the first shojo manga series to sell over 61 million copies in Japan, making the series the best-selling shojo manga in Japan. The series went on to win the 1996 Shogakukan Comic Award in the Girls Preferred Division.

Crown of Thorns

VOLUME 1
SHOJO BEAT EDITION

STORY AND ART BY
Yoko Kamio

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English translation rights arranged by SHUEISHA Inc.

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Published by
VIZ Media, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

